

Message Text

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PAGE 01 REYKJA 00610 031823Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0610

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO COMICEDEFOR, CINCLANT AND SECDEF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MARR IC NATO

SUBJECT: IDF RETENTION NEGOTIATIONS: CONVERSATION WITH CHAIRMAN OF
ALTHING FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

1. I HAD INTERESTING CONVERSATION FEW DAYS AGO WITH THORARINN THORARINSSON, CHAIRMAN OF ALTHING FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE (FRC) WHICH WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE A MAJOR DEPARTURE FROM HIS ORIGINAL VIEWS ON IDF ISSUE. THORARINSSON HAS ALWAYS ALIGNED HIMSELF WITH EXTREME LEFT WING OF PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PP) AND HAS BEEN VOCAL OPPONENT OF IDF. AS EDITOR OF PP PAPER TIMINN HIS EDITORIALS WERE ALWAYS ANTI-MILITARY PRESENCE AND ALSO GENERALLY NEGATIVE ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN OTHER AREAS OF THE WORLD, ESPECIALLY EAST ASIA.

2. THORARINSSON TOLD ME HOW PLEASED THE PRIMMIN, FONMIN AND HE WERE REGARDING RECEPTION FONMIN RECEIVED IN WASHINGTON. THEY WERE PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED WITH THE DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE SECRETARY KISSINGER AND MESSRS. RUSH AND SISCO HAD IN ICELANDIC AFFAIRS. HE SAID THE MEETING WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER DISPELLED ALL DOUBTS HE AND SOME OF HIS FRC COLLEAGUES HAD ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IDF AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE IDF ISSUE AS AN ELEMENT IN ATTEMPTS TO ACHIEVE EAST-WEST DETENTE. HE SAID HE COULD NOW UNDERSTAND WHY THE ORIGINAL COALITION GOVT DEFENSE POLICY DEADLINE OF REMOVAL OF IDF BY JUNE 1975 WAS NOT REALISTIC.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 REYKJA 00610 031823Z

HE ADDED HE ASSUMES THE STAGED WITHDRAWAL DATES SPECIFIED IN THE

CURRENT GOI PROPOSALS ARE ALSO UNREALISTIC.

3. THORARINSSON ASKED WHEN USG RESPONSE TO GOI PROPOSALS COULD BE EXPECTED. WHEN I RESPONDED IT DIFFICULT TO SAY BECAUSE PROPOSALS WERE COMPLICATED, HE EAGERLY AGREED THEY REQUIRED DETAILED STUDY. HE ADDED THAT SINCE GOI HAD TAKEN 4 MONTHS TO RESPOND TO USG NOVEMBER PROPOSALS IT WAS LOGICAL WE HAVE AT LEAST THAT LONG TO RESPOND TO GOI'S APRIL PROPOSALS. (COMMENT: HE HAS SINCE MADE SUCH A STATEMENT IN PP CIRCLES.)

4. THORARINSSON ASKED WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE IN FOUR OR FIVE YEARS (RPT FOUR OR FIVE YEARS) TO HAVE THE IDF COMPOSED OF "AMERICAN CIVILIAN MANPOWER, A MINIMUM OF MILITARY, AND A MINIMUM OF ICELANDIC PERSONNEL. ICELANDERS ROLE WOULD BE LIMITED TO POLICE FUNCTIONS." I REPLIED THAT THE COMPOSITION WAS NOT IMPROBABLE PROVIDED WE COULD REACH AN AGREEMENT ON THE MIX.

5. THORARINSSON CONFIRMED THAT PRESENT COALITION GOVT WAS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE BECAUSE OF ECONOMIC CRISIS AND REMARKED THAT NEW ELECTIONS ARE IN THE OFFING. HE THEN STATED THAT HIS PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND THE OPPOSITION INDEPENDENCE PARTY ARE LOGICAL GOVT PARTNERS AND SHOULD FORM A NEW GOVT FOR "STABILITY OF ICELAND." HE SAID USG HOLDS THE KEY TO THIS, WHICH HE DEFINED AS THE DEFENSE ISSUE. I REPLIED THAT USG HAS NEVER AND WILL NEVER INTERFERE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ICELAND AND THAT THE STABILITY OF THE ICELANDIC GOVT AND THE COMPOSITION OF THAT GOVT ARE ENTIRELY AN ICELANDIC AFFAIR. I SAID THAT THE DEFENSE ISSUE SHOULD BE RESOLVED ON ITS OWN MERITS. THORARINSSON RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT IF USG COULD ACCEPT "SOMETHING" IN THE GOI PROPOSALS IT WOULD BE EASIER FOR HIS PARTY TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY. I REPLIED THAT USG'S RESPONSE WILL BE AN OBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF THE DEFENSE NEEDS OF ICELAND AND THE FULFILLMENT OF ICELAND'S OBLIGATION TO NATO AS MEASURED IN TODAY'S TIME FRAME. I ADDED THAT FONMIN ASSURED US AT RECENT ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS IN WASHINGTON THAT GOI WILL REMAIN IN NATO AND AS A NATO MEMBER WANTS TO HONOR AN OBLIGATION WHICH MEMBERSHIP IMPLIES. HE AGREED FULLY. HE SAID HE ONLY MEANT TO CONVEY THAT HE HOPED USG RESPONSE WOULD BE SUCH AS TO PERMIT HIS PARTY TO REACH AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY. WE BOTH AGREED TO HAVE FURTHER DISCUSSION ON DEFENSE ISSUE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 REYKJA 00610 031823Z

6. COMMENT: THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT REPORTS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER HAVE HAD AN IMPACT ON THORARINSSON. THIS HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY SEVERAL SOURCES. IT IS ALSO EVIDENT THAT THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY IS ABOUT TO UNDERGO AN IRREPARABLE SPLIT OVER THE DEFENSE ISSUE AND I SUSPECT THORARINSSON WANTS TO BE ON THE WINNING SIDE. THORARINSSON WIELDS MUCH POWER WITHIN HIS PARTY AND IN THE ALTHING. I INTEND TO

FOLLOW THROUGH AND HOLD MORE DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM. UP TO NOW HE
WAS RELUCTANT TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS ON DEFENSE MATTERS WITH
NON-ICELANDERS.
IRVING

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED.

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